

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for managing the use of electronic content, the method including:

executing an application program, the application program being capable of rendering electronic content, the application program having at least a first predefined attribute associated therewith;

requesting the application program to render a piece of electronic content, the piece of electronic content having at least a second predefined attribute associated therewith, and the piece of electronic content further having associated therewith at least one rule, the rule specifying that the piece of electronic content may be rendered by application programs having the first predefined attribute associated therewith;

verifying the association of the second predefined attribute with the piece of electronic content;

verifying the association of the first predefined attribute with the application program;

rendering the content using the application program.
2. A method as in claim 1, in which the first predefined attribute is generated by a first entity, and the second predefined attribute is generated by a second entity different from the first entity.
3. A method as in claim 2, in which the first entity comprises an association of one or more content providers, and the first predefined attribute is associated with the application program if the application program meets certain predefined criteria set by the association.

4. A method as in claim 3, in which the second entity comprises an entity concerned with controlling the nature of the electronic content that is rendered by the application program, and the second attribute is associated with the electronic content if the electronic content meets certain predefined standards.
5. A method as in claim 4, in which the second entity comprises a private or governmental entity that determines whether content is appropriate for minors, and the second attribute indicates that the content is deemed to be appropriate for minors.
6. A method as in claim 3, in which the piece of electronic content comprises a prescription, and in which the first entity associates the first attribute with the application program if it is determined that the application program will handle the prescription with at least a predefined level of security.
7. A method as in claim 6, in which the predefined level of security includes a requirement that the application verify that an application user has a predefined certificate before rendering the prescription.
8. A method as in claim 7, in which predefined certificate indicates that the user is a licensed pharmacist.
9. A method as in claim 7, in which a certified pharmacist is identified by an attribute issued by a third entity different from the first and second entities.
10. A method as in claim 4, in which the second entity associates the second attribute with the prescription if the prescription originated from a certified physician.
11. A method as in claim 10, in which a certified physician is identified by an certificate issued by a third entity different from the first and second entities.

12. A method as in claim 11, in which the second entity determines that a prescription originated from a certified physician by checking for the presence of the certificate issued by the third entity.
13. A method as in claim 12, in which the rendering application is further associated with a fourth attribute, the fourth attribute attesting to a determination having been made by a fourth entity that the application program possesses a predefined functionality.
14. A method as in claim 13, in which the predefined functionality includes functionality that ensures that the application program verifies the presence of the second attribute before rendering the electronic content.
15. A method as in claim 14, further including:

verifying the association between the application and the fourth attribute.
16. A method as in claim 1, in which the step of verifying the presence of the second predefined attribute is performed during or after the step of verifying the presence of the first predefined attribute.